Best practices to prevent medicine residues in milk

General guidelines

Guidelines for the diagnosis and treatment of conditions affecting cows should be provided by your veterinary surgeon and outlined in your Herd Health Plan. Your veterinary surgeon will prescribe medicine treatments when they are required. Treatments not listed in the plan should not be used. Every effort should be made to reduce the use of antibiotics on farm to reduce the risk of contaminating the food chain.

1. Milk last.
2. Ensure the milk transfer line is disconnected from the bulk tank and connected to a suitable vessel before milking.
3. Ensure all animals are obviously marked in case they escape.
4. Fully wash equipment with detergent and disinfect the plant before it is next used.

Avoiding accidental contamination during the milking routine

Does the treatment protocol include the use of a medicine?

YES

NO

No action is necessary.

Use the medicine as directed by the prescribing veterinary surgeon.

1. Mark the animal before you treat it.
2. Record the treatment in the medicines book, including date of all treatments, cow ID, product used, batch number, dose and withdrawal period end date (statutory requirement).
3. Keep a list of all treated cows somewhere obvious, e.g. a memo board in the parlour.
4. Remember, bought-in cows may have been treated without your knowledge.

Does this treatment trigger a milk withdrawal period?

YES

NO

Follow the instruction on the product.

Ensure that all dump milk is collected and disposed of in an appropriate manner. Milk from cows treated with antibiotics SHOULD NOT be fed to calves.

Avoiding accidental contamination during the milking routine

Are treated cows and those under milk withdrawal milked with the rest of the main herd?

YES

NO

Use at least 2 methods of identification e.g. tail tape, leg band.

Are treated cows milked into a separate dump line or bucket with a separate cluster?

YES

NO

Separate and mark the correct cows and dry them off after milking.

Use a separate dump line or bucket with a separate cluster and milk last.

Procedures specific to dry cows

Review your Herd Health Plan detailing the procedure for ‘drying off’ cows with your veterinary surgeon.

Does this cow need antibiotic dry cow therapy?

YES

NO

Dry off cow using the protocol outlined in your Herd Health Plan.

Is the treatment protocol labeled?

YES

NO

Consult your vet.

Have you identified all dry cows after treating them with antibiotics?

YES

NO

Use at least 2 methods of identification that will last the whole dry period e.g. tail tape, leg tape, leg band.

Have you recorded the treatment?

YES

NO

Read the manufacturer’s recommendations and make a note of the earliest date milk can go back in the tank. Bear in mind the statutory 96-hour post-calving withdrawal.

Are the dry cows kept separate from the milking cows, even when the herd is grazing?

YES

NO

Keep dry cows separate to reduce accidental milking and to provide for their general and nutritional management separately to the milking group.

Ensure that all dump milk is collected and disposed of in an appropriate manner. Milk from cows treated with antibiotics SHOULD NOT be fed to calves.

Unless advised by your veterinary surgeon, follow the manufacturer’s instructions for the correct number of treatments, treatment interval, dose rate and withdrawal period. If in doubt, always consult your veterinary surgeon, who may recommend an appropriate withdrawal period and/or the use of a suitable antibiotic residue test.

Use a separate dump line or bucket with a separate cluster and milk last.

Record date, product, batch number, cow ID and withdrawal period end date.

Check your records to ensure you know when the milk can go back in the tank. Do you know this date?

YES

NO

Always observe the full withdrawal period of the dry cow product, irrespective of when the cow calves, it is good practice to test milk before putting it in the bulk tank. Remember, bought-in cows and heifers may have been treated without your knowledge.

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